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ABSTRACT

Educationally, economically, or psychologically disadvantaged women suffer from even more social and economic injustices than do other women. Although a woman's ability to provide for herself rises with her educational level, approximately half of all American women lack a high school diploma. Family relationships, religious tradition, school practices, and blue collar attitudes foster women's feelings of fatalism and powerlessness. Interviews with three Adult Basic Education (ABE) program participants reveal that disadvantaged women feel a lack of freedom, fear of life, and lack of confidence. They resent the way they are treated as wives and are accustomed to being dependent. Four ABE objectives can alleviate these feelings: (1) to enable women to develop academic skills, (2) to help women recognize and appreciate their abilities and strengths, (3) to promote the full development of each woman's intellectual capacity, and (4) to make women aware of available life-style options. To achieve these goals teachers must be able to teach women from disadvantaged backgrounds. Personal and vocational counseling, individualized instruction, and flexible programs allowing for women's childrearing responsibilities are necessary. Widespread sexism in learning materials with respect to roles, vocational opportunities, life-styles, and general characteristics must be eliminated. (MN)

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THE DISADVANTAGED WOMAN IN AMERICA
HOW ADULT EDUCATION CAN PROMOTE
HER GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

A PLAN B PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

by

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Description of the Problem

> "I am young and I possess many buried qualities; I am young and strong and am living a great adventure...Every day I feel that I am developing inwardly, that the liberation is drawing nearer and how beautiful nature is, how good the people are about me, how interesting the adventure is! Why then, should I be in despair?"

These brave words were written by a young girl, Anne Frank, who in 1944 was living in captivity, isolated from the outside world and struggling daily not only to survive but to grow as a human being. Her anguish is echoed today in the lives of millions of American women who are confined within barriers less tangible, but nevertheless real. Deprived through lack of education, income, and status, they are not able to live free, self-determined lives. They might well cry, "Why then, should I be in despair?"

To answer this question, it is necessary to understand the environmental influences that shape a woman's perception of herself and her lifestyle. This paper will focus upon the barriers that the disadvantaged woman in particular faces and the societal influences that impinge upon her. It will suggest the role that education, sensitized to her plight, can play in developing new avenues of growth and self-actualization.

As a total group in American society, women are the "disadvantaged sex." They do not earn as much money as men do, even with comparable educa-

tions. They do not hold nearly as many positions of power as men; their voices are absent from political offices, from executive suites, from the market place, from church pulpits. They live in one of the most progressive, affluent countries in the world, yet they do not share equally with men in the direction of its policies or programs. They do not enjoy the variety of options that most men do; in fact, many women do not even conceive of choices or alternatives in life patterns. Women have come to view themselves as a minority group and have adopted many of the attitudes and behaviors of such a group, including feelings of inferiority, dependency and resentment.[1]

For many women in America, the situation is even more difficult and less rewarding. These are the disadvantaged women. In relation to women in general, these persons are handicapped in definite ways and live in a state of need or inadequacy which does, in fact, exist for them or is perceived by them to exist. In this paper, the term "disadvantaged" is used to refer to those women who are deprived in one or more of these areas: educationally, economically, and psychologically. Dependent to a very great extent upon others, they feel a pervading sense of helplessness to direct their own lives. In varying degrees, they lack autonomy, independence and freedom of choice.

Four main topics comprise the scope of this paper: 1) a demographic description of the disadvantaged woman, 2) the societal influences which socialize her to a feminine role, 3) personal reflections from three women, and 4) the function of education in assisting women to gain the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed for independent, self-directed living.

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[1] Helen Hacker, "Women as a Minority Group", Woman Dependent or Independent Variable (New York, 1975), p.86.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of the study should be noted here. First, a larger body of statistical data concerning the demographic characteristics of the disadvantaged woman could have been included. However, in order to keep the discussion clear and understandable, only the most pertinent figures are mentioned. The data is presented for a single purpose; that is, to enable the reader to form a meaningful picture of the woman in America.

In the chapter on societal influences, care was taken to deliberately confine the discussion to three topics. Rather than describe the many factors which do indeed exist, the writer decided to present only three in adequate detail for the reader's understanding.

The last section of the paper which discusses materials in Adult Basic Education classes was limited to a description of four principal publishers. Again, it was the intent to inform the reader of major characteristics, not to supply an extensive overview of the entire field.

By narrowing the scope of data presented, of topics discussed, and literature surveyed, the writer attempted to keep the exposition clear, cogent, and interesting. The paper will serve its function if its readers develop a fresh awareness of the situation and, where possible, a sense of responsibility for supporting important educational changes.

Chapter 2: Women in Society
A Demographic Background

Education

The more education a woman has, the more likely she is to be employed, regardless of marital status.[2] A narrative description from the United States Census Report of 1970 affirms this statement by saying: "This (income from working women) has again been intimately related to school attainment."[3] The report goes on to say that lack of schooling is a strong barrier to employment among single women who can be expected to be in the job market in considerable numbers. Single women, thirty-four to fifty-four years of age with less than an eighth grade education, have a worker rate near thirty-five percent. That figure jumps to eighty-five percent for those with a high school diploma and moves well over the ninety percent mark for those with a college degree. Schooling makes a big difference among married women as well. Twenty-eight percent of those with a grade school education are in the working force; forty-eight percent of high school graduates are employed and almost sixty percent of the college graduates are working.[4] The data for both married and single women is shown below:

Education	Employed
Five years of college or more	71%
Four years of college	54%
High school graduate	48%
Less than eight years	24%

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2 National Advisory Council on Adult Education, A Target Population, 1974, p.17.
3 Ibid., p. 17.
4 Ibid., p. 17.
5 "The Status of Women", Editorial Research Reports, Vol. II. (Aug. 5, 1970) p. 213.

Two additional facts contributing to the educational picture are:

> Fifty-three percent of all American women have less than a high school degree.[6]
>
> Four million women in 1960 had less than five years of school.[7]

Employment

Forty-seven percent of all women, sixteen years and over, are employed in America. Thirty-three million women constitute two out of five workers in this country.[8] In the last twenty-five years, the number of women in the work force between forty-five and fifty-four years of age has risen by one-hundred percent. Married women accounted for thirty percent of all working women in 1949 compared to sixty percent in 1970.[9]

More than sixty-four percent of all working women are employed as service, sales or clerical personnel or as domestic servants. Women make up only three percent of the craftsmen and less than one percent of skilled tradesmen.[10]

Women in Occupations[11]

Clerical	33%
Service jobs	22%
Blue-collar work	13.3%
Sales	7.2%
Management/Administration	5%
Professional/Technical	14.5%

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6 Ibid., p.213.
7 Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, American Women, 1963, p.10.
8 "Women Today", U.S. News, Vol.79, (Dec. 8, 1975) p.56.
9 Editorial Research Reports, op.cit., p.215.
10 Elsie M. Gould, American Women Today (Englewood Cliffs, 1972) p.14.
11 Mary L. McBee, The American Woman: Who Will She Be? (Beverly Hills,1974) p.71-72.

Men are three times as heavily represented in managerial and administrative categories as women, fifteen times more in the crafts.

Statistics reveal a need for women to be more fully represented in labor unions and in union management. Women are reportedly entering the labor force much faster than they are entering unions. For every major union in which women have made significant headway as top-level policy makers, there are at least two where the male overbalance remains unchanged. A new trade-union directory issued by the United States Department of Labor and based upon union membership records showed that "women hold seven percent of union governing posts though they made up 21.3% of overall union membership and forty percent of the national labor force.[12]

In 1974, the median earnings for men was $12,152. For women, it was $6,957. Women earned fifty-seven percent of what men earned. On the average, women college graduates earn less than men with an elementary school education.[13]

In Minnesota, five percent of working women and forty percent of the men earn more than $10,000. Women make up twenty-eight percent of the full-time, year-round labor force but receive only eighteen percent of the pay. Men earn over $100 a week more than women.[14]

Women as Head of Household

Families headed by women made up thirty-seven percent of all low income families in 1970. The number of female headed families increased by 24% during the past decade. The impact of low female earnings is very severe in female headed families which in 1970 contained 4.8 million children under the

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12 "Top Labor Positions Leave out Women", Minneapolis Tribune, June 12, 1977.
13 U.S. News, op.cit., p.57.
14 "Economic Status of Women", Minneapolis Tribune, April 15, 1977.

age of eighteen living in poverty (of a total of 10.5 million poverty-level children).[15]

Ten percent of all American families are headed by a woman, but forty percent of families classified as poor have female heads.[16]

Eleven percent of all white children live in homes where the father is absent; forty-one percent of all black children live in such families.[17]

A female head of household can expect to earn only three-fifths as much money as if she were a man.[18]

Summary of Data

The foregoing statistics collected from a variety of sources reveal certain unmistakable patterns:

1) A woman's ability to provide for herself rises with her level of education. Yet, approximately one-half of all women in America do not possess a high school diploma.

2) Regardless of her education, a woman can expect to earn less than a man. In fact, the earnings gap between men and women has widened in recent years, according to Juanita Kreps.[19] This is true even when men and women are doing similar work. If females were paid at the same rate as males, the national payroll would have to be increased by fifty-nine billion dollars![20]

3) Women are over-represented in certain occupations and under-represented in others. Artificial barriers raised by sex-discrimination practices keep women out of many better paying jobs.

4) Women who are raising children alone represent a high proportion of all poor families. They suffer from inadequate educa-

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15 McBee, op.cit., p.69.
16 Carol Andreas, Sex and Caste in America (Englewood Cliffs, 1971) p.50.
17 "Women in the Nation Today", Editorial Research Reports, Vol. II, (Sept. 10, 1976) p. 665.
18 McBee, op.cit., p.114.
19 Ibid., p.74.
20 Janet S. Chafetz, Masculine/Feminine or Human? (Itasca, 1974) p.125.

tion, job-training and a lower pay differential than men.

5) Divorce frequently results in a greatly reduced income for women, often at a poverty level. One under-lying reason for this is that women have not been educated or trained for jobs that will adequately support themselves or their families. As Dr. Janice Hogan of the University of Minnesota says: "While equal division of material goods may be possible, division of resources never is."[21]

6) The oft-heard statement that women are only working for "pin-money" is a myth which should be discounted once and for all. Patsy Mink emphasizes that: "Most women work because of economic need. Nearly two-thirds of all women workers are single, divorced, widowed, separated, or have husbands whose earnings are less than $7,000 a year."[22]

7) Women do not need more jobs; they need better jobs. The status of the disadvantaged woman will never change unless she has the opportunity to find employment in jobs such as the skilled trades where earnings are much higher than they are for clerical work.

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[21] "Mother's Post-Divorce Role Cheats Children", Minneapolis Star, September 28, 1977.

[22] McBee, op. cit., p.114.

Chapter 3: Societal Influences and the Socialization of Women

Jessie Bernard, in discussing the societal structures men and women live in says: "The rules in the world women inhabit are different from those in the world men inhabit. Men and women march to different drummers. They are not even in the same parade."[23] Their school experiences are different from those of boys and men, religious institutions are different for them, and marriage is different. The socialization process of becoming a woman or a man begins in infancy, is imparted to the young child by parents, and is expanded in school and church. Society arranges for girls and boys to have varying sets of experiences in preparation for their future adult roles. The disadvantaged woman is subject to these influences as is her middle or upper class counterpoint, although their degree of impact and each woman's responsiveness will vary.

Family Relationships

Parents initiate the socialization process. Studies have discovered that parents assign different qualities to girls and boys from birth. In recent research by Broverman, psychologists found that mothers described daughters as little, delicate, beautiful; boys as strong, alert, well-coordinated.[24] Parents provide sex-typed toys and clothes, may discourage girls from engaging in rough play, often allow boys more freedom in being away from home at

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[23] Ibid., p.82.

[24] Rhoda Unger and Florence Denmark, Woman: Dependent or Independent Variable? (New York, 1975) p. 172.

an earlier age than they do girls. Several studies point out that dependency is more acceptable in girls, but is discouraged in boys by parents, teachers and the mass media. The little girl has "less encouragement for independence, more parental protectiveness...as a result she does not develop skills in coping with her environment nor confidence in her ability to do so."[25] Working class parents make even sharper distinctions than do middle class parents between the social roles of girls and boys. Investigators working with Mirra Komarovsky, a sociologist noted for her studies of women, found that children from working class families were aware of their sex roles earlier and more clearly than were middle class children. "The gulf between the sexes does exist."[26] Komarovsky also generalized that these parents are typically traditional in their child-rearing practices; they are protective toward their daughters, expect conformity to rules and want them to behave like "good" girls.

School Practices

America's educational system continues the process of defining a woman's opportunity and potential according to her sex. Textbooks in elementary schools tend to depict males as the protagonists; females appear less often than males and when they do they are pictured as timid, helpless and dependent upon the boys. Stories are often occupationally sex-stereotyped. There is a conspicuous absence of women from secondary books, whether the subject is politics, science or history. Because girls grow up knowing little or nothing about the contributions women have made, they frequently develop the feeling that progress and achievement is exclusively a male

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25 Ibid., p.741.
26 Mirra Komarovsky, Blue Collar Marriage (New York, 1967) p.149.

domain. Teachers may have preconceived notions of how girls and boys "should" behave and what activities they "should" engage in. They may praise girls for being "good", thereby adding to the myth that girls are properly passive and conforming. Lois Hoffman in her article "Early Childhood Experience and Women's Achievement Motive" asks the compelling question: "Is it possible for the educational system to use the positive motivations of girls to help them more fully develop their intellectual capacities rather than to train them in obedient learning? The educational system that rewards conformity and discourages divergent thinking might be examined for its role in the pattern we have described."[27]

At adolescence, boys begin to pull ahead of girls in mathematical and visual-spatial skills, girls in verbal skills. Much money and teacher-time is spent in remedial reading programs, which serve more boys than girls, but there are virtually no remedial math classes for girls.

Also at this time, girls tend to become preoccupied with looks, popularity and boys. Their status depends upon catching the "right" boy. For many girls it becomes more important to be attractive to boys than to succeed in school. These are the years in which both males and females are faced with making major decisions. Unfortunately, these choices are often made within the boundaries of stereotypic ideas. Vocational counseling may reinforce sex-role stereotypes rather than suggesting a range of options for girls.

Religious Tradition

Another institution which contributes to a girl's or a woman's sense of self is religion. Up to now, in all religious the ministry has been

[27] Unger and Denmark, op.cit., p.743.

totally masculine and the image of God has been male. Women have absorbed the idea that they are not "worthy" to serve as clergy and much of religious teaching has demeaned the female and her sexuality. Women have been termed "impure", "naturally inferior", the "temptress of man". They have been enjoined to "be obedient to your husbands...woman reflects the glory of man... woman was created for man's sake."[28] Again, as with parents and schools, churches devalue a woman's desire for independence and self-expression. Serving others and being submissive is the message the female gets.

Other Barriers and Their Relationship to "Blue-Collar" Families

In addition to these three major societal influences, the disadvantaged woman faces other obstacles to self-realization that a low socio-economic status often brings. Her life is greatly affected by certain definite limitations, limitations which may also affect women at other levels of society but are generally experienced to a greater degree by the disadvantaged woman. She is subject to limited alternatives; throughout her life she experiences only a very narrow range of situations. Her opportunity to participate in social or community life is small and she commonly finds employment in routine-type jobs. She occupies a position of helplessness in relation to the rest of the world and often to her husband in particular. Her skills are minimal and she sometimes does not know where to go to acquire information to change her situation. She feels the frustrations of deprivation because relative to the rest of society she is unable to have many of the things that are synonomous with success. This awareness she

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[28] Chafetz, op.cit., p.98.

has of her status and its association in her mind with failure often leads to withdrawal and embarrassment. She suffers from feelings of insecurity knowing that hers and her family's welfare can change radically without her control. Lacking skills of her own, she must depend upon her husband for the little security she has.[29]

In 1962, Mirra Komarovsky wrote Blue-Collar Marriage, a study of fifty-eight married couples with the following characteristics: they were white, Protestant, parents of at least one child, blue collar workers and had a high school education or less. Her book which has been praised as a "classic" and "a brilliant example of the case study method" was revised in 1967. It provides lucid insights into the relationship between husband and wife and into the role of the disadvantaged woman.

In studying the power structure of marriage, Komarovsky found that patriarchal attitudes were more prevalent among the less educated of her sample population than was an equalitarian viewpoint. The couples who felt that men should make the important decisions in the family were those with less than a high school education. The greater the educational attainments of the couple, the more they felt that husband and wife should share in decision making. "The traditional acceptance of masculine dominance has not disappeared...The authority attached to the husband's status is certainly one source of his power in some of the families."[30] This becomes especially true when the husband takes selfish advantage of his position and the wife accepts frustrations as the normal lot of married women. The wife often feels that the husband is the more competent; he, after all, represents

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[29] Lola M. Irelan, Low Income Life Styles (Washington D.C., 1967) p.2.
[30] Komarovsky, op.cit., p.225.

the outside world, has more contacts with other people, and more experience in dealing with and managing life situations. Her feeling of being subservient to her husband poses a handicap to any desire she has to do something with her own life. She finds it difficult to think of herself in any other role than the familial one. Researchers in the Irelan study found that "men feel dominant and the women downtrodden."[31] The husband offers the woman the most tangible opportunity for love and security; he is a symbol of her defense against an unpredictable world. Often she is afraid to assert herself against her husband lest he leave her.

Another sex-role pattern that emerged from both the Irelan and Komarovsky studies is that both men and women tend to accept the traditional separation of masculine and feminine tasks; hence, there is little conflict over the division of labor in the home. The women simply do not expect assistance from their husbands who seem to think of their responsibility as that of providing the money to meet material needs. He consequently often plays a minimal role in the family but expects "titular authority" while demanding the freedom to come and go as he wants.

When asked who has it harder in marriage, sixteen of the twenty-six less educated women said, "A woman...she is more tied down." "She is practically in jail." "Takes care of the kids around the clock." The wives have almost total responsibility for the care of the children. The husband expects that a "good" wife will keep the house running smoothly and he uses her as a housekeeper-mother. Wives often expressed strong wishes for greater communication between themselves and their husbands and for the develop-

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[31] Irelan, op.cit., p.19.

ment of the interpersonal aspects of marriage. "It is not that she resists the performance of household and motherly duties; rather she resents the husband's limitation of the marital relationship to them."[32] The segregation of sex-roles reinforces the woman's sense of isolation.

One-third of the fifty-eight women expressed a strong desire for work. Among their motives for wanting employment were the desire for the things that money can buy, the sheer pride of being able to earn something, and wanting to "get out of the house."

One key feature of the disadvantaged woman's situation is her feelings of fatalism and powerlessness, even in choosing a husband. She does not regard herself as an active selector of a mate nor does she give much conscious thought to the decision to marry. "Somehow it was settled" or "We just did it" were responses to a question about the decision to marry.[33] In many cases, marriage offers one escape from an intolerable home situation. However, rather than finding companionship and communication in the new relationship, the woman often feels emotionally isolated from her husband. Since the partners often tend to see themselves as opposed to each other and belonging to different worlds, the disadvantaged wife must endure emotional deprivation along with economic poverty. To compensate for her husband's lack of attention and for the dullness of life, she frequently seeks gratification through her children. Motherhood becomes her most significant role.

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[32] Ibid. p.19.
[33] Ibid. p.16.

Chapter 4: Three Women Speak

Sarah

In order to personalize the preceding discussion of the special difficulties of the disadvantaged woman, this writer held informal conversations with three women attending an Adult Basic Education class.[34] Sarah B., a forty-nine year old, white woman, mother of eight children, is married to a man who spent much of his life away from the family, either as a traveling salesman or as a patient in and out of mental hospitals. He suffered a severe stroke three years ago and lost his speech and much of his motor control. After caring for him at home for the past year and a half because she felt it was her "duty", Sarah has now given up and placed him in a nursing home.

In recalling her adolescence, Sarah remembers "nothing but work". Her parents lived on a farm in North Dakota and that is where her "job" was. She never even thought of the possibility of doing anything else. When she was in the ninth grade, her parents took her out of school to help on the farm doing heavy field work. This was during the Depression and her parents had no hired help. However, in her large family of brothers and sisters, Sarah, the oldest, was the only child who was not allowed to finish school.

She married Bill to "get the hell out of the house". She admits to

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[34] Adult Basic Education (ABE) is a federally funded program which provides educational opportunities for adults who lack eighth grade level skills. The program seeks to improve the adult's reading, math and language competencies. Classes are held in schools, churches, libraries, correctional institutions and rehabilitation sites throughout the country. The women presented here attended classes in Minneapolis at a daytime school.

having had "a little love probably for him" but that love was dissipated during the years of her pregnancies. Working as a traveling salesman during the fifties and sixties, Bill contributed a very small and sporadic income. Sarah remembers making baby food out of flour, sugar and water; of giving the children popcorn for dinner and pretending it was a party. When her youngest child was a year old, Sarah went to work at Munsingwear doing piece work. She was "scared to death" but was also truly desperate for money to support her family. For twelve years she worked the night shift; this way she could be home with the children during the day.

The children! The Catholic Church, which Sarah conscientiously followed, forbade birth control and Bill expected and demanded sex as his due. Sarah confessed, "I began to feel like a machine. The love I once had for him vanished. There were times when I wanted to kill myself."

Helplessness, emotional isolation, economic hardship, limited alternatives---all these characteristics of the disadvantaged are personified in Sarah's life. The decision to get married was not really a free choice; rather, it was a way out of a very unhappy situation. She had literally no control over her sexuality, she was obedient to both the teachings of her parents and the church, and her decision to work was made out of extreme necessity. Life just "happened" to Sarah, and she had to meet each new crisis as it came along.

What feelings does this breed? Resentment is one she mentioned. Resentment toward her parents for never talking openly with her about life or helping her to prepare for the roles of wife and mother. Resentment toward her husband because he enjoyed the freedom of being out of the home, meeting new people, hearing new ideas. "Life was easier for him than it was for me. I did the same old thing over everyday. I resented him when he came home."

Sarah attended adult classes and received her GED certificate. She then tried to go on to nursing school but found it impossible to study, take care of the children and her ill husband. Now she is faced, perhaps for the first time in her life, with making an independent decision. "I don't know what I'll do. I'm so darned afraid to get out and look for a job. I just don't have any confidence at all."

Delores

Delores L. is a black woman, divorced from her first husband and the mother of an eight year old boy. She is now remarried. She grew up in Arkansas, where she attended a one-room school for black children. If the weather was good, she worked in the fields; if it was bad she could go to school. "I always felt so behind, like I could just never catch up and understand what was going on." The white kids went "sailing by" in busses while Delores walked five miles to school. "This made me feel really put-down and inferior," she admitted. Her intermittent education ended when she was fourteen and she went to work in a hospital. "My parents were sad when I left school, but they didn't have much education themselves and didn't encourage me to continue." Working meant that Delores could make money to buy the things she had wanted. "I just couldn't keep going to school when I didn't have money for clothes."

Delores has returned to school now, at forty-one years of age, to get the education she never had. "When I get my GED, I'll feel like I have a degree from the University!" Education is a very important value for her. "If <u>you</u> don't know things, you can't teach your child anything. Educated people can live better, know more how to take care of children. Without it, I'm like a plane without propellers. I can't go anywhere without it. I'll never be complete unless I get my high school education."

Getting married was a chance for Delores to get away from home. She feels a woman exchanges one kind of bondage for another. Her description of becoming a mother was particularily vivid: "The man gives the woman a baby. Then he's free to go around wherever he wants and he keeps his 'fat' wife at home. By the time we women have the baby we love it because we've gone through hell to get it. So you start out feeling all downcast."

Delores feels husbands are able to progress in the outside world while the wife loses seven or eight years tied down to children. This belief is accentuated by her husband's attitude that the house and the children are totally her job. He does not help her with anything around the house nor does he spend time with the little boy. "Nobody does nothing for us. If we women want to get anywhere in life, we have to do it all ourselves."

Delores' marriage is another example of emotional isolationism. She cannot talk to her husband about the problems or the ideas she has because he has no willingness to listen to her point of view. The realities of her marriage contradict what she wants out of the relationship. She spoke of the ideal of husband and wife mutually helping each other, of communicating and sharing together.

In spite of all the deprivation and lack of encouragement Delores has had, she is highly ambitious for herself. She believes that once she has a high school education, she can get decent employment in a hospital and "move ahead". Women's place is not in the home, she firmly asserts.

Anita

Anita is a very pretty woman, thirty-five years old, and a native of Cuba who has been in this country since 1965. She has been participating in the Adult Basic Education class for a year; however, her progress has been

slow because she is able to attend just four or five hours a week. Because she operates a beauty shop in the basement of her home, she can only leave to go to school for short periods of time. Her husband, Gustav, exerts much pressure upon her to earn money even though he is a successful contractor. He does not consider school a worthwhile alternative and does whatever he can to discourage her in this pursuit. Anita is trapped now in a most frustrating situation. Although she wants to leave her husband, she depends upon him as a business manager for she can read only at fourth grade level. Her math skills stop at multiplication, and her spelling is so poor that she cannot write a simple sentence. ABE offers her a lifeline of survival that she clings to with utter desperation. Until she can read more adequately, compose a letter, and keep her business records clearly, she does not feel ready to leave whatever security she has now.

Anita knows very well what it means to be dominated by men. When she was four and five years old, she was sexually abused by her uncle several times. This had such a devastating effect upon her that she could not adjust to school. Frightened and lonely, Anita became so emotionally dependent upon her mother that she left school in the third grade, never to return again. As she grew into adolescence, she grew totally submissive to her mother who dominated every part of her life. Since she was forbidden to go to parties or out on dates, Anita would sneak out of the house to see other young people. When she was just sixteen, she grasped at the first chance she had to leave home---by marrying a man she hardly knew. Unfortunately, her escape was no solution to her predicament. "It was worse being married than living at home," she remarked. "I guess what I wanted was love and attention, but I didn't ever get it."

Anita was completely unprepared for the realities of marriage, which

included giving birth to two children in two years, living in a confinement as great as she had had with her mother, and realizing that her husband was not at all interested in the frustrations of her life. Finally, unable to stand her husband's "chasing around" and his disregard for her feelings, she left him, took her two children and flew to Florida, in spite of the fact that she was pregnant with the third child.

Anita's situation in Florida was very difficult. She lived with her sister for awhile, but soon had to find work to pay for food and other simple necessities for herself and her children. She spoke no English and knew nothing about American customs or behavior. "But I watched people and that way I learned how to act. I fought for my life." She remembers now how bitter those days were. "It would make me cry so much when I didn't have any milk to give the children. I was just about ready to go out and get somebody for a dollar." Anita found a job as a seamstress, however, and she was able to keep her family together.

Through the support of friends at the church Anita attended, she moved to Minneapolis. These friends also provided the money for her to go to beauty school. During this time, she met Gustav and they were married. Throughout the five years they have lived together, Anita's feelings have undergone deep changes. Her love and respect for him have vanished as she has experienced the disappointments of living with another tyrant. He treats her as a child, makes all the decisions, tells her exactly what she must and must not do. He is also gone from her and the children frequently with friends of his own.

Faith in God has grown to be a source of great inner strength and determination for Anita. Rather than allowing her resentment and discouragement to overwhelm her, she has developed a firm belief in herself and an

absolutely unshakable desire to make a good life for herself. "I am going to learn to read and write so nobody can ever take advantage of me again. I have to learn because it I don't know the words right, I can't defend myself. I am never ever going to let a man take over me again."

Reflections

On the basis of the information presented from various sociological and psychological resources and from the three personal examples, it is possible to draw several general conclusions about the disadvantaged woman in America today. These summary statements are not offered as absolutes, rather as tentative descriptions. Certainly it is not possible to describe a large group of people from a limited data base, nor to suppose that all women have the same experiences or feelings. The degree to which they share these feelings is also an individual matter. However, synthesizing the information can help clarify understanding of these women and suggest avenues of support.

How does the disadvantaged woman perceive herself? What are her feelings about herself as a person? The most pervasive characteristic, one which affects all other aspects of her life and alters her responses and aspirations, is that she does not possess freedom. She is not free to do what she wants nor to be what she dreams of. In many cases, she has not had the opportunity to even discover what she really wants or to begin to know herself as a separate entity apart from her family. Her life has been controlled by parents, by husband, by lack of money and education. As a result, she has not made conscious choices for herself. The alternatives simply have not been there for her.

Secondly, she is fearful of life and uncertain of her ability to do things for herself. Since she lacks education and training, she feels she

has no skills to offer the world of work. She downgrades her own wealth of experience and believes that because she does not measure up to society's expectations of success that she is a failure. She has not had the opportunity to enjoy the feelings of pride and confidence a person develops when she is able to earn her own money. Third, she is resentful of the way she is treated as a wife. Husbands who have expected a "wife-mother", not a friend or companion, or who have downgraded their wives' abilities, have contributed to the woman's lack of self-esteem and her sense of discouragement. Fourth, she is accustomed to being a dependent person, compliant to the demands and restrictions that she meets in her life. This pattern makes self-assertion difficult. It is truly paradoxical that in spite of all the barriers she has lived with, she still has the desire to be something in life other than a wife and mother. She is aware of other women who are out in the world. She is sensitive to the feelings within herself that tell her that there is more to life and to being truly human than what she now has. She wants education, a job that pays decently, a man with whom she can share herself, and the chance to grow personally and develop her abilities.

Chapter 5: Objectives of an Adult Education Program for Women

> "Education is a vital ladder to opportunity and freedom of choice. The amount and kind of education a woman has will make a profound difference in her life. Thus, we must begin to raise questions about the adequacy of education of women."[35]

The words that Patricia Cross uses in this succinct statement of need, such as "vital ladder", "freedom of choice", "profound difference", express concerns which are highly relevant to the needs of the disadvantaged woman. Margaret Mead also emphasizes the important of education:

> "In the United States, change comes through a change of educational style. Opening new kinds of educational opportunities for women is a way of saying most definitely that women can and should, as individuals, contribute more to society as trained and responsible participants."[36]

Adult Basic Education is one of these "new kinds of educational opportunities"; it offers great promise for women because of the very nature of its philosophy and structure. It is predicated upon serving the individual needs of its students; it is a young, emerging field and is therefore receptive to new challenges; its teachers are increasingly seeking professional training in colleges and universities. In order to meet this new mandate, however, both administrators and teachers will need to acquaint themselves

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35 McBee, op.cit., p.123-124.

36 Margaret Mead and Frances Kaplan (editors) American Women: The Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 1965) p.6.

with the situational background of the disadvantaged woman, to be aware of her history and of the influences that shaped her and then be willing to allocate adequate resources toward her education. Changes in attitude concerning women in education will occur when those in charge of programs and funding see a need for innovation and are motivated to implement new policies.

Four primary objectives of an ABE program committed to assisting women will be discussed in this chapter followed by a description of possible methods which may be utilized to reach these goals.

Objective One: To enable women to develop and improve their academic skills so that they may qualify for jobs or build careers to support themselves adequately and independently.

With the roles of wife and mother now changing radically, allowing women greater freedom to be away from home, the qualifications a woman has for work will grow increasingly important. As pointed out earlier in Chapter Two, nearly fifty percent of all American women over sixteen years of age are employed outside the home. The sociological trend is unmistakably in the direction of acceleration of women into the work force and, importantly, of these women seeking more rewarding work than formerly---careers instead of jobs. Data from the 1970 U.S. Census Reports points out that the jobs in demand in future years will be of managerial, technical or professional nature.[37] Clearly, the mandate for adult education will be to provide the necessary learning opportunities so that the adult will qualify for more demanding types of employment.

As job requirements consistently become more sophisticated, the pro-

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[37] National Advisory Council on Adult Education, op.cit., p.14.

ficiency levels for reading, computation and writing will rise. ABE can give women the chance to improve these academic skills so that they compete successfully on the job market. Education can also prepare women to qualify for employment in occupations that are not traditionally female. Teachers and counselors can broaden a woman's perspective so that she will consider entering fields such as the trades where her salary and advancement potential are greaters than in typical "female jobs". The clerical field, for example, a long established haven for females, is notoriously poor paying and offers little or no mobility for the ambitious.

Speakers and writers often compare education metaphorically to a "key opening doors", and "a tool for advancement". A sound ABE program can literally fulfill this figurative promise.

Objective Two: To assist women to recognize and appreciate their own individual abilities and strengths.

Without confidence, a woman cannot use her education to move ahead in more independent directions. The personal interviews recounted earlier emphasized that one salient feature of disadvantaged women is their lack of self-esteen. Examples of several of the most frequently heard remarks in an ABE classroom are:

"I've never been able to do this."
"I'm afraid to try it."
"No one will believe me when I tell them I'm back in school."
"I know I'm not smart enough to learn this."

Just as a human being needs the sustenance of food and drink, women need to be nurtured with day-by-day successes to convince themselves that they have tremendous inner resources just waiting to be developed. When adults experience success in the classroom, when they see that they can learn, can

communicate openly with others, they then are free to replace defeatist attitudes with positive, self-directed actions.

Objective Three: To promote the full development of each woman's intellectual capacity.

Several hundred years ago, John Milton wrote that "Talent is death to hide." This statement is as true now as it was in Milton's time for hidden or undeveloped abilities are stultifying to the person and to her community as well. Education can liberate a woman's talents and allow her to realize latent capacities. The more than women begin to fulfill their potentialities, the higher their achievements and aspirations will be. The more they can feel their own lives enriched and the more they can enrich the lives of others.

Objective Four: To enable women to be aware of the options in life-styles that are available to them so that they can make positive, meaningful decisions in directing their lives.

Adult Basic Education is a viable program for assisting women to acquire the knowledge and the confidence necessary to make wise choices for themselves, rather then allowing themselves to be manipulated by circumstances. Whether the decision be that of marriage or job, children or no children, a secretarial position or advanced training, ABE can demonstrate to women ways of evaluating the possibilities open to them. Those who plan and direct educational programs must be sensitive to the fact that women's roles have changed much in the last fifteen years and will continue to change dramatically. This change will be reflected in women's everyday life styles and in the decisions they will be forced to make. For example, Patricia Cross warns that with the world's population growing at an alarming rate, motherhood will no longer carry a social reward. "A woman will have to enjoy being a mother and she must

take personal satisfaction in fulfilling that role.[38] Clearly, her primary value to society will not be in producing children, as it has formerly been. Also, with birth control means readily available, women from all social levels will be able to determine the number of children they have. These two social phenomenon imply vast changes for the American woman. If she does not have to raise a number of children over an extended period of time, what will she choose to do with her life? Education can help her to examine answers to these questions. Indeed it will need to as future years will bring greater decision-making opportunities to even the disadvantaged woman. Imaginative education can assist women who have previously had little experience in self-direction to explore a wide range of alternatives in life-styles, careers, marriage and other relationships. When women are aware of of the varieties of alternatives open to them and have the self-confidence to use them, they have taken the first step on the "vital ladder" that Patricia Cross talks about.

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[38] McBee, op.cit., p.122.

Chapter 6: Educational Methods

What strategies may Adult Basic Education use to fulfill these objectives? What techniques may teachers and counselors employ to help these goals become a reality? Four general educational methods are presented in this chapter:

1. Teacher-student relationship
2. Counseling functions
3. Instructional approaches
4. Programming adaptations

Teacher-Student Relationship

In any instructional situation, the relationship between the teacher and the student is the essence of the entire process. It is even more vital in a program dealing with deprived women who are unable to function creatively because they do not know how to or because they are too frightened to do so. Successful teaching of adults requires two principal types of skills: interpersonal and instructional.

The first attribute of the teacher is that she or he be able to relate in a warm, positive way with each student. Teachers who truly accept the women in their classrooms as persons of real worth, who genuinely appreciate the unique and special qualities of each individual and then communicate the message: "I really care for you...I really like you and enjoy you...You are remarkable and valuable" can help the students develop feelings of worth and esteem. The teacher may know all there is to know about phonics or vocabulary development, but unless he or she truly enjoys each individual and

really understands "where she is coming from" the educational program will have small impact upon the woman's life.

Second, it is essestial that the instructor possess a wide knowledge of teaching techniques, of the sequence of skills needed by the women in the classroom, and of methods to involve the student in the planning of her educational program. Teaching women who come from very diverse backgrounds, who learn at different rates and lack different kinds of information requires a teacher with a broad background of knowledge. It also demands a teacher who is constantly learning herself/himself and imparting this enthusiasm and curiosity to the students.

Finally, the underlying implication for adult education is that the teacher engage the woman in self-directed learning. Malcolm Knowles expresses this idea very eloquently when he says:

> "The truly artistic teacher of adults perceives the locus of responsibility for learning to be in the learners; he conscientiously suppresses his own compulsion to teach what he knows his students ought to learn in favor of helping his students learn for themselves what they want to learn."[39]

Teachers are guides; they enable the adult to become aware of her own experience and to discover for herself the important questions and the answers to them. Teachers and students are partners in the process of learning.

Counseling Functions

In order that an educational program will have significant impact upon the lives of disadvantaged women, ABE needs to make a serious commitment to counseling in the planning and operation of its programs. Many

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[39] Malcolm Knowles, The Modern Practice of Adult Education (New York, 1970) p.51.

women do not know what they want to do with their lives; they feel a need for change but their goals are not clear to them. Counseling can give women new insights into their strengths and needs. Since women will have to cope with definite barriers, such as confusion about their status as women, conflict about role and identity along with low levels of confidence, counseling can provide supportive mechanisms to overcome these hardships. It can act as a bridge between the woman's education and her participation in life. As Freda Goldman expresses it, "...women need the extra attention, the encouragement to overcome passivity and fear."[40]

Through contact with a counselor, a woman can also enlarge her knowledge of the jobs that are available today and can examine the total range of occupations so that she does not limit her vocational choice simply because she lacks awareness. Counseling can suggest job opportunities that will fully utilize each woman's own talents and energies.

Both individual and group counseling techniques can function in an ABE program; both can benefit the client personally and vocationally. Group sessions which allow women the chance to share problems, worries, frustrations and experiences are invaluable confidence builders and ego-supporters. They offer a sense of community in which women may develop courage to use their intelligence and the confidence to take the opportunity to use it.

Instructional Approaches

To be successful, the teaching approach will focus upon the student as an individual, not as a member of a class; upon the person to be served, not the subject to be taught. Techniques of individualizing instruction, such

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[40] Freda Goldman, A Turning to Take Next (Syracuse, 1970) p.25.

as one-to-one teaching, small group participation and cooperative planning of the program all facilitate learning. The wise teaching strategy will be sensitive to the woman's past experience and will draw upon this background to enrich the learning process.

Highly interactive discussion sessions where the process of group dynamics is the key to impacting upon women is a powerful instructional tool. Under the direction of the teacher who acts as a facilitator, women together can explore the perimeters of their problems. They can discover for themselves that their concerns are not unique but are shared by their friends in the classroom. The barriers that fear and a sense of isolation build can be surmounted and women can find consolation and support from the rich new insights that they are not struggling alone.

Programming Adaptations

Effective education for women requires a responsiveness to the unusual needs of women and a willingness to answer these needs with flexible programs. In the past, education has been designed to accomodate men more specifically than women. Men's life stages are generally quite stable; women's, on the other hand, do not follow one particular pattern. Women have a life style that is often interrupted by child bearing and rearing. This necessitates the creation of programs which allow women the freedom to enter and to leave when it is most advantageous to them. Also, the needs of women vary according to certain times in their lives. The woman of forty who is trying to enter the world of work for the first time and the young mother with children to care for have very special goals. Education is extremely important at times when new choices are to be made.

Adjustments in the conditions of learning to accomodate these requirements are important. Opportunities for part-time study, for accelerating the process when desirable, for independent study, for daytime hours need to be available. Child-care arrangements that enable mothers to participate are another consideration. Those who plan ABE programs for women thus have many very specialized criteria to consider.

Chapter 7: Sexism in Materials

Introduction

One of the most influential tools a teacher can use in the instructional process is the material the student studies from. Not only does the material teach academic skills, it also develops attitudes and values in the student's mind. During recent years, much detailed study has been given to books used in elementary and secondary schools to determine to what extent they reflect stereotypes of male and female roles and characteristics. Basal reading series have been revised in an attempt to portray more objectively a non-sexist viewpoint. New materials which show women as participants in the political, economic, cultural or human service areas of society have been introduced in both elementary and high school classrooms. These efforts have quickened the awareness of teachers and publishers to the great effect that curriculum materials have upon the minds and emotions of their readers.

Investigation into sexism in teaching materials, however, has not occurred in adult education. In fact, this writer is not aware of any such study, nor even of any concern on the part of publishers, administrators or most teachers. Thus, to be able to discuss this topic, it was necessary to conduct a limited survey of selected Adult Basic Education materials. In making this assessment, books from four of the largest publishers were reviewed. These publishers are: The Follett Company, New Readers Press, the Steck Vaughn Company and Allied Press. This chapter presents "capsule" descriptions of materials and a general evaluation. In reviewing the materials, the

following criteria were considered:

1. In what types of roles did the stories depict men and women, occupationally and at home?
2. What kinds of vocational opportunities did the book describe for women and men?
3. What kinds of life-styles did the materials reveal?
4. What general characteristics did the materials impute to women?

The Follett Company

The Follett Publishing Company offers a set of four books entitled Accent/Consumer Education Series. These books, which are written for adults and senior high school students, present informative, factual material on such topics as understanding credit, buying insurance, making a budget and knowing your rights as a consumer. The chief shortcoming of these books is that they give the strong impression of having been written by a man to describe a man's world. For example, the book on insurance talks of a family breadwinner with a normal love for his wife and children. Articles deal exlusively with the traditional male concerns of supporting a family, providing them with security, investing the savings that the husband has earned. All the illustrations, except one, in the entire series were of males. The implication is that the world of law, credit, consumerism and investing is strictly a man's world.

Another series published is entitled Accent/Family Finances. One book in this set "How Eddie and Maria Got More for Their Money" offers the story of a married woman going to work to "help out". She tells a friend,

> "With all the kids in school now, there's no reason why I can't go back to work."

Her friend warns her that it may not be worth it; when the children are sick she will have to stay home and lose a day's pay. Maria gets a job, how-

ever, and the family moves to a new apartment. Maria worries about the baby-sitter, about fixing dinner when she gets home, about having to spend money to buy new clothes for herself. The story presents no positive reward for Maria; instead of being a source of satisfaction for her, work is merely a supplement to their income and is filled with negative consequences. At the end of the story, Eddie, her husband, says he is dissatisfied with this way of living. According to him, Maria is too busy, is always tired at night, and their weekends are filled with too many chores.

"That cuts into our free time," he complains.

Eddie then suggests that in two or three years, with careful savings and his entering a job-training program, they will have a better salary and Maria will be able to stay home.

"That will be nice, Eddie. Do you think we can do it?"

Not only is Maria a true "help-mate", she is also good-natured, cooperative and completely passive in her responses to her husband.

Another book in the same set called "Just Married" also depicts the working wife, Linda, as a helper. After the young couple has tried many other ways of improving their financial situation, Linda decides she just has to take a job. Her husband asks,

> "Are you sure you want to go to work? I didn't plan on your working."

Later she reminds him they must keep on saving:

> "I'd like to have a nicer apartment some day. Besides, I don't want to work forever."
>
> He replies, "I don't want you to either, Linda."

Two books in the series do present a more positive outlook, however, and show women managing their own life-situation. One deals with a young work-

ing woman (her job is that of a poorly paid clerical worker, however) whose mother has just moved in with her. She has the initiative to go to a family guidance service for help because her mother has no means of support. The other book is written about a young women who is learning to "keep a job, manage a budget, find an apartment and understand credit.

New Readers Press

New Readers Press, which publishes a book called The World of Work does a fairly straightforward job of describing such issues as choosing and finding a job and understanding job trends. It has a chapter devoted to describing jobs for the "mature" person. Both text and pictures show men and women working together; women are not subordinate to men on the job, as they are in many of the other books reviewed. The book Occupations 2 groups jobs into categories such as semiskilled, skilled, technical, clerical, and others. It pictures men and women in each classification in what appears to be a deliberate effort to get away from stereotyped roles.

The Laubach Streamlined English series, which is also a New Readers Press offering, contrasts sharply with this approach. This series, by the way, is used extensively by the Right to Read Program across the country. Not only are the books written and illustrated to appeal more to men than to women, the stories show men participating in many kinds of occupational roles and being active in a variety of sports. In contrast to this, every story which included women (none in the entire series was written strictly about a woman) showed females as members of a family group, either as wives or mothers. In Book Four, there is a page entitled "Four Short Stories". The first story reads:

"The mother taught her daughter how to set the table.
She showed her where to set the plates.

> She taught her to put the spoons on the right side of the plate. The girl set the table every day. She set it in the right way."

The other three stories are about George North keeping his Ford clean, about a boy named Roy who is busy putting oil in the family car, and Harry, who is about to marry the farmer's daughter!

> "Harry will marry the farmer's daughter. He is in a hurry to get to the church. But he does not have to hurry. For Mary, the farmer's daughter, is looking in the mirror to fix her hair. She tells Harry she is sorry she is late. Harry tells her to hurry. All the people in the church are merry to see Harry marry Mary."

This little gem reflects many stereotypes of women, including their vanity, their tardiness and even alludes to the trite story of the farmer's daughter!

Steck Vaughn Company

Steck Vaughn, one of the largest publishers of adult materials,has just introduced a new series on the market. Their Adult Reading Sequential Program consists of seven books. The first books deal with decoding skills, but Reading 1400 contains four stories designed to teach reading comprehension skills. Two of the stories deal with men, Mr. Night and Mr. House. Because Mr. Night is out of work, he decides to go to a school for adults. He studies hard so that he can get a job. His counterpart, Mr. House, has a business of his own at which he is very successful. It is interesting to contrast these two stories, one of a man bettering himself by going to school and the other of a man who is independent and prosperous,with the stories about women. The first story in the book, for example, called "Two at a Time" is about Mr. and Mrs.

Young, who have just had twins, and their family.

> "How to get a house large enough for their family was a problem for Mr. and Mrs. Young. Mr. Young had to work many years for them to get the house they had now. Mr. Young could work at night, too, but he would not be home enough."

The implication in this excerpt is that the husband is the one who naturally bears the entire burden of supporting the family; he is the one who has put his shoulder to the grindstone so that his dependents at home can have food and shelter. In the next part of the story, Mrs. Young worries:

> "We need more money. We need more money...I must help out. I will just have to go to work also. There is no other way out of this. I would rather not work now. I don't want to work when the children are so young, but we just cannot make it any other way."

At this point the story ends, leaving the reader with the impression that work outside the home is very undesirable, that a mother's rightful place is to be in the home, and again, the woman's contribution is merely an emergency answer to a desperate need.

Mrs. Best, a woman evidently experiencing a mid-life crisis, is the heroine of the book's fourth story. All her children have left home, her husband is away at work all day and she is left alone. Feeling that she must get out of the house, she wonders what she can do. Mrs. Best finds the solution by involving herself in volunteer work with children. The philosophy that guides her is expressed:

> "Do for others and you will be better for it."

Allied Press

Allied Press, producers of the widely used Mott Series of reading and

language skills workbooks, was the last publisher reviewed for this study. The most impressive feature of these books, including the 600A, 600B, 900A, 900B, 300 and 600 comprehension series, is that the subject matter of the articles is overwhelmingly male-oriented. For example, out of the twenty-one biographical sketches in the 600 and 900 books, only one was written about a woman. Other articles in the series dealt with baseball, pirates, dinosaurs, submarines and cowboys. Two criticisms can be directed to the Mott Series. One, the topics offered to readers, either male or female, are neither current nor relevant to adult concerns and interests. Second, most women would find little content matter with which to identify.

Evaluation

To evaluate the data, it is helpful to refer to the four questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. The first asked, "In what role or roles did the stories depict men and women?" The answer is simple. Women are portrayed as wives and mothers, as types rather than individuals. If they leave the sanctuary of their homes to go to work, they do so out of dire necessity to supplement their hard-working husband's income. Usually all other methods of relief have been exhausted before the wife decides she must work. Also, several times in stories the wife works so that the husband can attend adult classes or vocational training programs. A typical illustration of this is the couple where the man is upgrading his skills by participating in a technical school while his wife works full time as a clerk for $247 a month. Not one book out of the thirty-two which were analyzed included even one story about a woman who went to work because she wanted to. Not one woman expressed any need to find satisfaction outside the home or to develop a career for herself. Neither did any book show a woman expanding her own skills.

The second question asked, "What types of vocational opportunities did the books describe for men and women?" Publishers appear to have a very stereotypic view of the ABE student. Their writers obviously work from the assumption that these students are always content to be semi-skilled, blue-collar, or clerical workers. Not only is this generalization unfair and unrealistic, it also fails to allow for individual differences in motivation, capacity, and opportunity. Experience in ABE programs reveals students who move from classrooms to colleges, to paraprofessional and professional careers. Another major criticism is that the great majority of books separate jobs into "male" and "female" categories. Men are mainly pictured as welders, machinists, factory workers. Women are cast in the roles of typists, switchboard operators or file clerks.

"What kinds of life-styles did the materials reveal?" A feminine reader of ABE materials would have little opportunity to become aware of varying patterns of life because the view given is that of a traditional, conservative, middle-class life style. A woman marries in her late teens or early twenties, has children, remains at home unless impelled by urgent need to work. In the newer books, the reader can find stories of single women on their own, but this is still rare. Women in these books live in neat houses with husbands and children. They have flower gardens, go for drives on Sunday and even go to the beauty shop! While this may reflect the lives of some ABE students, it does not even come close for most. As currently published, the materials have few or no stories of divorced women, of the single parent, of women who do not want to marry. They do not show women struggling to raise children on limited incomes, women seeking career satisfactions, minority-group women with special problems of their own.

"What general characteristics did the material impute to women?" is the

fourth question asked in this study. Because women are pictured mainly as helpers, their personalities are delineated as self-effacing, self-sacrificing, obedient and compliant to husbands. The illustrations picture women as fairly young, twenty-one to thirty-five, always attractive and well-groomed. When older women are shown, they are generally applying for welfare or standing in line at unemployment offices. Women in ABE classes thus have no convincing models to identify with nor do they find their own daily problems reflected in the women they read about. None of the books showed any woman considering the possibility of making a choice in her life.

Perhaps the most important comment that can be made is that ABE publishers make no deliberate attempt to write <u>for</u> the female student. There is a great difference between including her in a series as Bill's wife or as Maria helping out and writing about her as an individual with needs and motivations of her own. There is also a great difference between showing all women as passive wives and writing about a woman who wants a career instead of children. The great fault is that the materials available in ABE do not allow women the opportunity to truly learn about themselves, to explore a variety of career choices or life style options. Publishers would do well to realize that they have a vast audience of women who are seeking the opportunity to learn, many for the first time in their life. These women will find study rewarding and exciting if the materials they read have relevance to them, speak to their problems and suggest new avenues of action and involvement.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This study has described the situation of a particular group of women in America, those deprived in an economic, an educational or a psychological sense. Pertinent sociological forces and personal relationships that impact upon this group have been outlined. A picture of women who are constrained by these barriers and have not been able to grow in their own individuality has been developed. Like creatures caught in complex webs, these women find life a struggle for survival. The freedom to grow, to stretch oneself outward to reach new horizons, to embrace the exciting possibilities life offers is beyond the realization of these women. All too often, seeing no way out of their constricted existence, they resign themselves to remaining within the narrow confines of their lives. All the richness and beauty of their experience is hidden from their consciousness; the latent abilities and talents they possess are not able to unfold. This is a double loss: to the individual herself and to society who never receives the contributions an educated, enlightened woman can share.

Adult education is one tool, a powerful one, that can free the potentialities that are now locked within the deprived woman. Responsive education can be the means to the releasing of maximum opportunity for each individual woman. Achieving this ideal will require a committment from those persons involved in the field of adult education. Before any step can be taken, teachers and administrators must become learners themselves and explore the situation with open minds and hearts. If they perceive the myriad

influences that make a woman's recognition of her life different from a man's and understand the barriers that have limited a woman's growth, they will have taken the first step toward creating significant educational programs for women. They will be initiators of a social change that will enrich American society. Women will be able to paraphrase Anne Frank's words:

> I possess many newly awakened talents...my life
> is a great adventure...how beautiful the world is...
> how good the people are about me...I feel alive,
> worthwhile and happy.

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